

An approach to enhance intercultural competence in EFL classrooms of universities of Sri Lanka

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This paper is an exploration of teaching intercultural competence in foreign language courses through the example of a pedagogical experience in local universities.

Language research increasingly acknowledges the intercultural dimension of foreign language acquisition. Intercultural communicative competence can therefore be considered as one of the central aims of foreign language education, so that learners can successfully communicate with people from different linguistic and cultural domains. However, there have been few empirical studies which illustrate intercultural competence with a view towards assisting its integration into classrooms.

The objective of this investigation is the increased understanding of practice of language competence along with intercultural competence as an educator, which entails the construction of an understanding of intercultural competence teaching and learning in the foreign language classroom. The study incorporates insights from critical pedagogy, critical multiculturalism, and intercultural competence theories and examines the ways in which the research process has influenced and reshaped classroom practice, paving the way for future improvements. During a classroom-based study over three academic semesters, an intercultural syllabus for an English writing course aimed at facilitating new understanding of cultural diversity contributed to the learners' intercultural awareness. Qualitative data collection and analysis endeavored to answer the questions by investigating student perceptions of cultural diversity and assessing their response to the syllabus. By focusing on the enhancement of students' intercultural competence, the study sought to identify successful strategies for teaching intercultural competence.

The analysis reflects a more fluid and moderate understanding which acquires the cultural 'other' in more positive ways. In addition, deeper understanding of intercultural issues is evidenced with reflection on the concept of culture and increased cultural self-awareness.

Keywords: Intercultural Competence, EFL, Multiculturalism, Teaching Strategies, Sri Lankan Students

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